
Government of the District of Columbia



DC Department of Public Works

Testimony of
William O. Howland, Jr.

Director

**Public Oversight Hearing
Department of Public Works FY 2007 and 2008
Performance and Spending**

February 22, 2008

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Jim Graham, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Room 412
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

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Before the Committee on Public Works and the Environment
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Introduction

- Good afternoon, Chairman Graham, members of the Committee and staff. I am William O. Howland, Jr., Director of the Department of Public Works. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our FY 2007 achievements and challenges, and what we have achieved to date in FY 2008.
- The mission of the Department of Public Works is to provide environmentally healthy municipal services that are both ecologically sound and cost effective. To that end, DPW serves all District residents, businesses, visitors and commuters by providing:
 - Solid waste and litter collection and disposal.
 - Street and alley cleaning.
 - Solid waste education and enforcement.
 - Parking enforcement, including towing, booting and removing abandoned vehicles.
 - Fleet management, including fueling and vehicle maintenance services.
- DPW is a data-driven organization that incorporates new technologies to improve service delivery, better allocate and account for resources and identify what are the next logical steps to further improve our work.
- I will go into more detail later in my testimony, but I would like to note that technology applied to routing trash, recycling and bulk collections increased efficiency, reduced missed collections and created training opportunities for collections staff at all levels.
- Whether we are measuring the tonnage from trash or recycling collections, the number of parking tickets issued or the percentage of mission-critical vehicles ready at the beginning of the workday, DPW knows statistics count.

FY 2007 Mayoral Initiatives – Achievements and Challenges

- Mayor Adrian Fenty set the bar for FY 2007, identifying a range of initiatives for our fleet, parking, and solid waste administrations.
- FY 2007 marked the beginning of the ultra low sulfur diesel era for the District's heavy vehicles. We met Mayor Fenty's challenge to switch all diesel-fueled vehicles to this new, more environmentally-sensitive fuel. I am happy to report all 2,416 affected vehicles are performing well and we comply with EPA regulations.

- We met Mayor Fenty’s mandate to reduce the light vehicle fleet by 150 vehicles. We introduced the “How Am I Driving” program as well as the rush-hour towing program.
- In addition to achieving Mayor Fenty’s goals for DPW, we also met our own performance goals. I will cite just a few of them.
- The Solid Waste Management Administration posted the following FY 2007 successes:
 - 99.6 percent on-time trash collections. Last year DPW collected more than 105,000 tons of trash.
 - 99.5 percent on-time recycling collections. DPW collected almost 25,000 tons of residential recycling.
 - 99.8 percent on-time bulk collections. DPW received almost 51,000 requests.
 - 100 percent same-day waste removal from the transfer stations, which means almost 436,000 tons of trash passed through the transfer stations last year.
- I would like to add that DPW swept more than 24,000 downtown and arterial lane miles and swept more than 33,000 residential lane miles.
- Our alley cleaning crews cleaned almost 6,000 alleys and collected almost 2,000 tons of trash from these alleys.
- SWEEP, the Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program, issued more than 14,000 Notices of Infraction.
- A major capital project – the Ft. Totten Trash Transfer Station – is on schedule. All significant tasks will be completed soon.
- The Parking Enforcement Management Administration made an incalculable contribution to the quality of life for residents and commuters by implementing the rush-hour towing program.
- More than 15,000 vehicles were towed during morning and evening rush hour periods. That means:
 - More people arrived at work on time.
 - Fewer people experienced stress or even road rage because of traffic jams; and
 - More families had dinner together, on time.
- I would like to add that the Abandoned Vehicle program removed more than 1,200 dangerous vehicles from public and private space; and DPW responded within 24 hours to 98.7 percent of our calls for residential parking enforcement, which is among our most requested services.

- Earlier I noted several of our Fleet Management Administration's achievements. I would like to add that Fleet provided 100 percent of mission-critical vehicles. In DPW, none of our achievements would have been possible without our vehicles.
- A particularly vehicle-intensive service is snow and ice control, and I'm glad we are here today during one of our winter storms so I can explain how we handle them.
- The vehicles and personnel we use for leaf and holiday tree collections and street and alley cleaning services are the same vehicles and personnel deployed to clear snow and ice from District streets during a storm.
- This week's storms resulted in suspending graffiti removal, litter can collections, overgrowth trimming and vacant lot cleaning operations. Only the most severe storm will cause us to suspend trash and recycling collections.
- Readiness is critical to successfully fighting snow and ice. When a winter storm is predicted, we discontinue our scheduled services to prepare our vehicles and have the crews in position before a storm begins.
- So far, we have prepared for about 15 snow and ice events, by discontinuing regular operations to be ready for whatever Mother Nature sent.
- Even though we prepared for 15 events, we had many fewer actual storms. Unfortunately, we have no way to know in advance which predicted storm will materialize. What we do know is public safety will be compromised if we don't take each prediction seriously.
- Being ready, being on our routes before the storm allowed us to get ahead of the Potomac Primary Day ice storm. Our preparedness led to a safer trip from work to home or the polls.

FY 2008 Performance Plan and Challenges

- I would like provide an overview of the Department's 2008 Performance Plan and highlight the areas Mayor Fenty identified as priorities. First, I will cite our three objectives:
 - OBJECTIVE 1: Keep DC clean. Ensure the cleanliness of the District's residential neighborhoods, high-visibility commercial areas, gateway corridors and industrial zones through a combination of direct services, education and enforcement.
 - OBJECTIVE 2: Parking. Ensure parking opportunities for District residents, businesses and visitors by encouraging voluntary compliance with parking regulations.
 - OBJECTIVE 3: Fleet maintenance to fleet management. Improve business processes to ensure mission critical equipment will be available for core services for all agencies.

- Among the initiatives within our performance plan, Mayor Fenty highlighted four DPW initiatives among his FY 2008 priorities:
 - Establish a permanent household hazardous waste and unwanted electronic drop-off site at the Benning Road and Ft. Totten Trash Transfer Stations.
 - Renew the city's cleanliness ratings.
 - Provide access to stolen vehicle information on the DPW parking enforcement systems.
 - Strengthen partnerships with District schools to provide vocational training opportunities.
- Mayor Fenty also set two goals that extend across FY07 and FY08 and require legislation: Sweepercam and accelerated graffiti removal.
- In FY 2007, we completed our test of the Sweepercam technology, and now we are ready to implement, once Council approves the legislation. What does Mayor Fenty hope to achieve from Sweepercam? He, along with District residents, want to see their streets cleaned timely and effectively.
- With Sweepercam, we can read the license plates of illegally parked vehicles that block our sweepers from removing pollutants, debris and dirt from our roadways. With Sweepercam we can achieve our goal of cleaner residential streets because motorists will respect the weekly parking restrictions.
- The second legislative initiative will accelerate graffiti removal.
- Last year, the District experienced a major increase in graffiti, especially on private property. As DPW was working to keep up with the increase, Mayor Fenty crafted a new strategy to speed up graffiti removal.
- Thank you, Chairman Graham, for joining the Mayor to announce this strategy that takes into consideration several facts:
 - The majority of graffiti is on private property.
 - DPW cannot remove graffiti from private property without the owner's permission, which results in either delayed removal or no removal.
 - Often, property owners do not have the means to remove graffiti themselves, which also results in either delayed or no removal.
- The legislation clarifies what is graffiti, who is responsible for abating it, the District's role in assisting with abatement, and when abatement must occur. It makes clear that individual property owners who are victims of graffiti will not be re-victimized by bearing the cost of restoring their homes or businesses.
- Bill 17-0270 accelerates removal of graffiti from private property, thus improving the visual appeal of our neighborhoods and the community-at-large. As well, the bill accelerates the

adjudication process for property owners wishing to appeal a notice of violation issued for failing to remove graffiti.

- We are looking forward to its passage so that we can be ready for the upcoming graffiti season.
- Also on the graffiti front, Chairman Graham, DPW appreciates your support for our work in this area and the funds made available for murals and anti-graffiti paint.
- As of today, with the assistance of your office, we have secured the permission of 10 property owners who will allow a mural to be painted on their property. We have an MOU with the Commission on the Arts to select the artists and distribute the funds for their murals. We will have up to 20 murals altogether by the end of this fiscal year.
- I also want to report that we expect to take delivery of the anti-graffiti paint within the next 30 days.
- Chairman Graham, your leadership is making \$1.3 million available to Business Improvement Districts and Main Street projects across the District to assist the smaller of these organizations with their anti-litter efforts.
- DPW has an MOU with the Department of Small, Local and Disadvantaged Businesses, which has grant-making authority to distribute the funds. DPW will provide technical assistance and monitoring. We expect the awards to be made this summer.
- While we are discussing anti-litter efforts, I would like to let you know that on March 8, the District government will host a Community Shred event, co-sponsored by NBC4, at RFK Stadium. On April 5, DPW and other DC government agencies join with Keep DC Beautiful for the Great American Clean-up; and our next Household Hazardous Waste/E-cycling event is April 26, at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre.
- I would like to conclude my testimony with some exciting news about our recycling program. Earlier in the fiscal year, we conducted a waste sort of trash collected from households across the District.
- The sort revealed where we have opportunities to increase the amount of materials we recycle, in particular aluminum cans and cardboard. I'm talking about cardboard that is used to make cereal boxes, paper towel rolls and packaging for other products.
- We are developing our strategy to tap into the residential waste stream so we can divert more into recycling. I will keep you aware of our work as we go forward.
- Thank you for this opportunity to testify about our accomplishments and challenges. I am ready to answer your questions.